DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 289 022 CE 049 175

AUTHOR Anderson, Clinton L.
TITLE Bachelor Degrees for Soldiers (BDFS) System.
PUB DATE 5 May 87
NOTE 10p.; Paper presented at the Annual National Conference on Nontraditional and Interdisciplinary Programs (5th, Virginia Beach, VA, May 5, 1987).
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *College Programs; *Distance Education; Extension Education; *External Degree Programs; Higher Education; *Military Personnel; *Military Training; Networks; Program Descriptions
IDENTIFIERS *Army; *Bachelor Degrees for Soldiers

ABSTRACT

Bachelor Degrees for Soldiers (BDFS) is a system of voluntary, off-duty bachelor degree programs for Army noncommissioned officers and warrant officers. Bachelor degree programs within the BDFS system are designed to relate directly to the military occupational specialty of soldiers. In operation since October 1986, the program grew out of the Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges, which offer associate degree programs. The BDFS system includes the following features: colleges limit required academic residency to 25 percent or less of the total degree program; educational plans are drawn up for each student; BDFS institutions award credit for nontraditional learning; BDFS institutions agree to guaranteed transferability of credit among colleges and universities in the network; the student-soldier can complete degree requirements after completion of military service; courses are scheduled to facilitate the soldier's completion of a sequence; and the colleges in the network publicize their programs to military personnel and their families. Currently, there are eight BDFS networks with more than 840 network units (one college offering one curriculum at one approved installation) operating around the world. Educational institutions are nominated for BDFS institutional membership by local U.S. Army Education Services officers. The BDFS system is expected to be expanded and refined in the future. (Technical information and lists of member institutions are provided in this report.) (KC)

**********
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
**********

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

ED289022

# BACHELOR DEGREES FOR SOLDIERS (BDFS) SYSTEM

Clinton L. Anderson*

## Introduction

The staff of Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges (SOC) coordinates degree programs provided for Army and Navy personnel by cooperating networks of civilian colleges and military installations. The SOC staff, composed of adult educators, curriculum technicians and education consultants, are all individuals from the civilian sector who have the responsibility of analyzing programs and their curricula, developing networks and working closely with member colleges and universities. The curricula are offered to servicemembers in their off-duty hours, on United States military installations throughout the world, on board Navy vessels, or on easily accessible campus sites. Currently, the Associate Degree Program consists of 19 separate networks with 82 participating colleges and universities. This program is known in the U.S. Army as SOCAD (Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges Associate Degree) and in the U.S. Navy as SOCNAV (Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges Associate Degree Navy). Both efforts have become integral to the Army and Navy voluntary education systems. Thousands of servicemembers are enrolling at "home colleges" using student agreements (including official evaluations and degree plans) being issued by those "home colleges" after no more than six semester hours of residency work are completed. In October 1986, the SOCAD-SOCNAV concept was extended to the four-year level through a series of networks of colleges and universities authorized to grant bachelor degrees. This new system is being initiated in cooperation with the Army with the possibility that it will be implemented by the Navy in the future. Even though the BDFS (Bachelor Degrees For Soldiers) system is the principal thrust of this paper, perhaps some additional background information concerning SOC would be helpful for those readers unfamiliar with the SOC organization and its functions.

---

* Much of this paper is an adaptation of written material obtained from Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges and used by written permission of Dr. Arden Pratt, SOC's Director. These materials are included in the reference listing.

Clinton L. Anderson, EdD
Lieutenant Colonel (Retired), U.S. Army
Senior Consultant, Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges
Route 3, Box 222, Lexington, VA 24450

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

C L Anderson

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."



CE041975

Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges (SOC)

SOC began in the early 1970s as a project of the American higher education community to expand and improve postsecondary educational opportunities for military personnel and veterans. Members of the military services have had a long history of striving for educational achievements. Tuition assistance and the educational benefits provisions of the Vietnam Era G-I Bill enouraged servicemembers to participate in college both while in-service and after leaving active duty. Yet, in reality, servicemembers were often faced with seemingly insurmountable hurdles that prevented many from pursuing a college education. Of those able to participate, many servicemembers simply took courses that happened to be available. Little thought or guidance was given to program planning that would result in meaningful degrees recognized both by military and civilian employers.

Common obstacles encountered by servicemembers included extraordinarily high mobility of military life, difficulty in commuting to classes on college campuses, rigidity of institutional residency requirements, wide variations among colleges' policies on acceptance of academic credit for degree programs, and failure of colleges to recognize learning and award credit for specialized military training and work experience that was clearly relevant to a particular degree program. SOC was created to help servicemembers overcome these geographic and institutional hurdles and to help the Department of Defense and the military services meet the voluntary higher education needs and aspirations of military students.

The SOC consortium was organized and is still sponsored by the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) and the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges (AACJC). Cooperating agencies include ten other major national education organizations, and the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense and the military services, including the U.S. Marine Corps and the U.S. Coast Guard. The SOC office is located in Suite 750, The National Center For Higher Education, One Dupont Circle, N.W., Washington, DC. More than 400 educational institutions are institutional members of SOC. These institutions have voluntarily agreed to comply with the "SOC Principles and Criteria" which were developed to overcome the common obstacles outlined above while maintaining educational quality. Collectively, SOC institutions offer a full range of associate and baccalaureate degree programs. SOC institutions often act as "home colleges" for servicemembers who, by prior agreement, earn academic
credits elsewhere.

During the mid-1970s, the U.S. Air Force established the Community College of the Air Force (CCAF) to offer a more complete and effective Associate Degree Program which directly related to the military training needs of the Air Force. The Army and Navy rejected both the idea of establishing in-service associate

degree-awarding colleges patterned after CCAF and the proposal to establish a Community College of the Armed Forces. Instead, the Army and the Navy requested that SOC coordinate their Associate Degree Programs with civilian educational institutions, hence SOCAD and SOCNAV.

Features of BDFS System

Specifically, BDFS is "a system of voluntary, off-duty bachelor degree programs designed for Army NCOs (Noncommissioned Officers) and Warrant Officers." (BDFS Handbook, Feb. 1987, p1-1.) Bachelor degree programs within the BDFS system are designed to relate directly to the military occupational specialty (MOS) of soldiers. Therefore, they apply to military job performance while the student is in service and will be recognized in the job market when the soldier becomes a veteran within the civilian sector. BDFS programs are offered by regionally accredited colleges and universities which have mutually agreed to comply, first, with the "SOC Principles and Criteria", and, second, with the specific features of the BDFS system as outlined below.

First, a BDFS institution limits required academic residency to 25 percent or less of the total degree program. Course work that constitutes this academic residency can be completed at any time within the program of study. BDFS institutions particularly avoid any "final year" or "final semester" residency requirement, subject to stated requirements in specific course areas such as majors.

Second, a BDFS Student Agreement is issued by the BDFS "home college" after no more than six semester hours or the equivalent in course work have been completed with that institution. BDFS Student Agreement includes an official evaluation and a degree plan.

Third, a BDFS institution awards credit, where applicable within the degree plan, for non-traditional learning, for MOS experience, military training courses and results of national examinations based on recommendations of the American Council on Education (ACE).

Fourth, a BDFS institution agrees to guaranteed transferability of credit among colleges and universities that are members of the BDFS networks, with no individual prior approval necessary. All BDFS credit transfer guarantees are specifically listed in the BDFS Handbook which is updated every six months. Section 6, BDFS Handbook details the guaranteed transfer elements of the BDFS system for both Major and Related courses and for General Education. Guaranteed transferability of credit is available only for those students who have been issued a BDFS Student Agreement.

Fifth, a BDFS institution agrees that the BDFS student agreement remains in force and the degree can be completed even after the student-soldier has left active military service.

Sixth, a BDFS institution guarantees tranfer of credits earned for a SOCAD degree to a related degree curriculum in the BDFS system. A BDFS student can earn at least 45 percent of the bachelor degree requirements by having completed a related SOCAD degree. The last part of Section 6, BDFS Handbook outlines the guarantees that are in effect for transfer of SOCAD associate degrees to related BDFS programs. It must be emphasized that this guarantee is available only for those BDFS students who have completed associate degrees through the SOCAD system. Not all associate degree curriculums offered on Army installations or made available on nearby college campuses or at off-post college resident centers are part of SOCAD. Neither are all bachelor degree curriculums available on or off military installations a part of the BDFS system. Only those curriculums listed in the SOCAD and BDFS Handbooks are part of the systems, and SOCAD and BDFS institutional membership applies only to those colleges whose curriculums are listed in the Handbooks.

Seventh, a BDFS institution will schedule courses in appropriate sequence, to facilitate soldiers completing their degree programs.

And eighth, each BDFS college or university has agreed to identify its approved programs as part of BDFS networks and to publicize this membership widely to those eligible to enroll, which in most cases includes both soldiers and their adult family members.

BDFS Curriculum Networks

A network in the BDFS system consists of a number of curriculums in a single program area offered by member colleges and universities. Currently there are eight BDFS networks with over 840 network units (one college offering one curriculum at one approved installation) operating around the world. The eight networks are shown in figure 1.

Figure 1

Operational Networks in BDFS System

Accounting Network

Computer Studies-Related Networks:
- Computer Studies Netork
- Information Systems Management Network

Management- Related Networks
- General Business (Management) Network
- Human Resources Management Network
- Management Network
- Operations Management Network
- Public Administration Network

The actual titles and the degree designations used by the member colleges and universities for curriculums included within a BDFS network vary widely. In some cases the connection between the actual degree title and the BDFS network in which it operates may not be obvious to the casual reader. Descriptive information and curriculum data sheets provided in the BDFS Handbook appear to clarify these relationships.

Even though the military services nominate colleges and universities for consideration to become BDFS system members, it is the SOC staff, composed strictly of civilians, that established and maintains the BDFS system. These individuals are not part of the military services. It is the SOC staff that requests program information from nominated institutions, analyzes program curricula, establishes and maintains networks, extends offers to institutions to become members, receives and reviews SOC Student Agreements, develops and maintains the BDFS Handbook and performs numerous other BDFS system development and implementation functions.

## BDFS Information and Assistance

Each BDFS college or university has designated a BDFS representative at the local campus. This person is generally quite knowledgeable concerning the BDFS curriculums offered by that institution and the specific department or school personnel in charge of them. Some institutions serving overseas locations have designated additional contact persons at those locations. The names of these contact persons are specified in the BDFS Handbook.

Assistance is also generally available from Army education center staff personnel (Education Services Officers, Education Services Specialists, and Education Counselors) who serve in over 630 Army education centers and sub-centers at Army posts, camps, stations, and communities wherever U.S. Army active duty soldiers are concentrated. If problems arise that cannot be resolved with the local Army education center staff or the BDFS college or university representatives, Army personnel are directed to seek a solution from their Major Army Command Education Officer. He or she, in turn, may seek guidance from Headquarters, Department of the Army (HQDA). BDFS institutional representatives and /or BDFS students may contact the SOC Office in Washington, DC, for help by calling toll free 800-368-5622.

Each year SOC and HQDA conduct several BDFS/SOCAD training workshops where Army and institutional representatives come together for formal training regarding the BDFS and SOCAD systems. Workshops occur regionally within the continental United States and at various locations overseas. Generally workshop attendance is beyond capacity. Training workshops appear to be key in successful system implementation. The functions of this training are included in figure 2.

Figure 2

Functions of the BDFS Training Workshops

Help all attendees:

1. Recognize the needs for the BDFS system.

2. Develop knowledge of the BDFS system to include:
   -Understanding the organization of the BDFS system;
   -Understanding the college/university role;
   -Understanding local Army Education Staff role;
   -Identification of BDFS students;
   -Understanding BDFS Student Agreement Form.

3. Develop a working knowledge of the BDFS system materials to include being able to locate and interpret all sections of the BDFS Handbook and to be able to use BDFS forms.

4. Develop effective counseling and advising skills needed to assist BDFS students.

5. Be able to market the BDFS system with local Army education staff, college/university faculty and staff, and with soldiers and their adult family members where appropriate.

BDFS Institutional Membership

Educational institutions are nominated for BDFS institutional membership by local U.S. Army Education Services Officers. These nominations are passed through normal Army staff channels to the Education Division, Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel, HQDA. SOC receives these nominations from HQDA. The SOC BDFS Program Associate obtains the necessary program information from the nominated institutions and develops the essential data for institutional networking as it would appear in the BDFS Handbook. Curriculum materials and course descriptions are sent to all current BDFS institutional members within the affected network or networks. Each current network institutional member has an opportunity to review in detail materials from prospective members including proposed BDFS Transfer Guarantees. Questions, concerns, and any institutional objections must be resolved before a final offer for BDFS institutional membership can be made by SOC to a nominated college or university. Once that offer is accepted, then the nominated institution must agree to become a BDFS institutional member and comply with all the stipulations and responsibilities inherent in BDFS membership. Current institutional membership is shown in figure 3.

Figure 3

BDFS Institutional Members (February 1987)

American Technological University
Athens State College
Brenau College
Cameron University
Campbell University
Chaminade University of Honolulu
Chapman College
Coker College
Colorado Technical College
Columbia College
Fayetteville State University
Golden Gate University
Hawaii Pacific College
Incarnate Word College
Methodist College
Metropolitan State University (MN)
Mount Senario College
National College
Northwestern State University of Louisiana
Our Lady of the Lake University
Paine College
Park College
Regis College
Saint Leo College
Southwest Texas State University
State University of New York College at Oswego
State University of New York College at Potsdam
State University of New York College of Technology
Troy State University
Troy State University at Dothan
University of Maryland University College
Wayland Baptist University
Western New England College

Other colleges and universities have been nominated and are in various stages of membership processing.

## Future of BDFS System

BDFS system development is a dynamic process undergoing expansion and refinement. New networks are in the process of being developed for future implementation (see figure 4). Other networks will be developed and instituted as requested by HQDA or the other military services.

Figure 4

Planned BDFS Networks Under Development

Applied Science and Technology
Aviation Management
Aviation Technology
Construction Technology
Corrections
Criminal Justice
Electronic Technology
Health Services Management
Health Services Technology
Medical Records Management
Office Management
Police Science
Technical Management

In the future, HQDA will consider bachelor degree programs delivered by alternative delivery systems for inclusion within BDFS networks . For the most part, the current college and university institutional members offer programs with courses presented in teacher-center, traditional classroom environments, albeit often on a military installation. SOC is in the process of identifying bachelor degree programs offered by a number of alternative delivery means and methods (for example, independent guided study, correspondence, teleconferencing, PLATO, personal computer, television, video and/or audio cassette, etc.). Upon completion of this identification process, HQDA will be advised on the availability of these types of programs. Based on this information, HQDA and SOC may consider incorporating selected programs into existing BDFS networks. Such an effort would concentrate on providing soldiers with additional educational opportunities aimed at developing and sustaining the self-directed adult learner.

## Conclusions

The BDFS system is a long planned, but only recently developed and implemented educational system. It offers soldiers a continuum for educational development from the associate to bachelor degree program levels. Potential for BDFS system growth includes its extension to all the military services and expansion into numerous additional curriculum networks and many instructional delivery systems. BDFS embodies the "SOC Principles and Criteria" aimed at reducing the hurdles often experienced in the past by servicemembers in achieving higher education objectives. But perhaps the key consideration is that the BDFS system strongly encourages servicemembers to engage in bachelor degree programs that are relevant to their military job performance, yet, at the same time, are fully recognized and applicable within the civilian workplace.

## References


Karasik, B.L. & Pratt, A.L. & Miller, W.A. (Ed.) (Oct. 1986). Bachelor Degrees For Soldiers System Training Workbook for Army Education Center Counselors and College Advisors. Washington, DC: Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges.

Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges (Feb. 1987). Bachelor Degrees For Soldiers Handbook. Second Edition. Washington, DC: Author.

Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges (Jan. 1985). Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges Guide 1985-86. Pensacola, FL: Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Education Support.

Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges (Jan.1986). SOC Principles and Criteria 1987-1988. Washington, DC: Author.

Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges (Undated). SOC-Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges. Brochure. Washington, DC: Author.